789 Poison is thus nãñde par excellence, although the latter can exist in other forms, at the same time less precise and more complex. We attach extreme importance to the fact that a rigorously utilitarian technique of the manufacture of poisons is found associated with a theory which accounts for their effectiveness through the intermediary of metaphysical concepts. The presence among the Nambikwara of a curare reduced to a basic product, and whose preparation excludes all ritual, associated with the very low cultural level of these Indians, poses in a particularly impressive way the question of finding out if these characteristics which are very primitive are so by origin or constitute the residue of an impoverished culture. Now, it is much more reasonable to interpret the apparent contradiction of theory [121 ●174] and practice in matters of poison by the loss of complex rituals which farther north are attached to the making of curare, than it would be to explain how a theory of supernatural character could have been built on the bases of treatment which has remained purely experimental, of the root of the strychnos.

Besides the notion of nãñde we should examine another which is the object of a particularly advanced elaboration among the eastern groups, that of the atũtu (al). Atũtu signifies animal, but the use of the term by the Indians is complex. First of all it is the animal taken in a generic sense, in opposition to the inanimate. They present me with a honey cake and, pointing out the body of a bee which is still in it, I ask what it is. They do not answer, "it is a bee" but: atũtu, "it is the animal." Atũtu also means real animals, but ones without their own names in the vocabulary, and which are of particularly fearful character. Thus oxen are called by this name by the Nambikwara who never saw any [99] before the years 1910-1915, and who entertain a great fear of them. Then we find the same term to designate the stars (eastern groups), and the same name is given to the ticktock of the clock, both conceived of as realities animated by mysterious characteristics. Finally, atũtu is a special animal of supernatural essence, which is seen appearing in two cases—at night, on the road, in certain places and during certain periods, and upon the approach of death. In the first case, one risks being attacked and killed by the atũtu if one does not defend oneself 789 in the appropriate manner. This means is found in the throwing stick 411 (kaiku) (distinct from the digging stick), thrown in a prescribed manner. The throwing stick, a large piece of wood of flattened form [284 and pointed at the end is furnished with a handle usually decorated 539] with black and white bark weaving (javelin: hi'dem [al], kahãjere

6: Levi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939) 1943
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

171 The objection may be raised that the old authors have interpreted inaccurate observations in the light of European data. Since we shall suggest the use of the word *compérage*—borrowed from the French—to identify the institution, which we consider to be an authentic aboriginal one, it will be useful to discuss briefly this aspect of the problem.

Without any doubt there is a striking analogy between the facts related above and the Latin-European institution of compérage. Originally the *compère* and the *commère* were connected with each other, and both with the child's parents, through the mystical link of parrainage. However, the relation was very soon secularised in all small rural communities, or rather, wherever the familial structures were of greater importance than the social ones; it was then used to establish an artificial link of kinship, or, more precisely, as is the case among the Nambikuara, to express in kinship terms a purely external relationship of spatial promiscuity.[5] The stranger or newcomer was adopted by means of the reciprocal appellation of *compère* or *commère* which he received from—and returned to—his male adult contemporaries. On the other hand, since the stranger usually assimilated himself to the group by marrying within his new community, the terms *compère* and "brother-in-law" soon became synonymous, so that men allied by marriage usually called each other only by the first term. In all small communities of Mediterranean Europe and of Latin America, the *compère* or *compadre* is an actual or a potential brother-in-law. No doubt in certain regions of Central and South America the analogy between the European and aboriginal institution has helped the latter to become fixed and modernized. Thus, in Mexico the primitive institution of the *molle*, that is, of the heads of families bound to exchange gifts at certain periods, now expresses itself by means of the "compadre" relationship, the Spanish term providing an easy translation of the earlier Otomi.[6] The formal analogy between the institutions cannot hide, however, the fact that they are really opposite in character. In Latin-Mediterranean society, the formerly mystical and, actually, social link of compérage may be changed, through marriage, into a real kinship tie. Among the ancient Tupi, as among the Nambikuara, the actual kinship provides the type of link used to establish wider relations.

174 171 174 This being admitted, there are two strong reasons why our authorities cannot have constructed a pseudo-institution based on a European pattern from inconsistent observations. In the first place, men as well acquainted with religious problems as were Yves d'Evreux, Cardim and Léry could not have assimilated a relationship whose first consequence and probable aim was to per-

[5] The same sociological distinction is expressed in English through the etymological origin of the word "gossip" (*god-sib*).

[6] Jacques Soustelle, *La Famille Otomi-Pame du Mexique Central* (Paris, Institut d'Ethnologie, 1937).

6: Levi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939) 1943
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

mit new forms of marriage to the relationship between godfathers and parents, the main purpose of which, especially since the thirteenth century, had been to impose new and very rigid restrictions upon marriage. At the time they were writing, the matter was of immediate interest and was being discussed by the Council of Trent, where the earlier rules were somewhat mitigated. But there is a much stronger argument: From the moment of the arrival of the European missionaries both institutions, the European and the aboriginal, actually coexisted among the Indians, at least among those who were baptized, and neither they nor their European priests ever interpreted the Christian "god-father" relationship in terms of the native "brother-in-law" institution. On the contrary, and much more logically, since the new relationship placed restrictions on marriage, they considered it as a modality of the relation of paternity; thus, they assimilated the "god-father" to a classificatory "father."

> They [the newly baptized children] regarded their god-fathers as their true fathers and called them *Cherou*, that is to say, "my father," and the French called them *Chemire*, that is to say, "my son," and the little girls *Chemire*, "my daughter." . . .[8]

Therefore, it cannot be doubted that the *couvade* is quite distinct from its European parallel.

A sufficient number of convergent indications have been recorded so that we may consider the outstanding character of the "brother-in-law" relationship a specific feature of South American sociology, constituting the core of an original institution of *couvade* which appears clearly among the Nambikuara and which, as suggested by the documents presented in this article, may formerly have had a much wider distribution on the continent.

[New School for Social Research
New York, New York]

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[8] Yves d'Evreux, *loc. cit.*, II, I, p. 236.

?:Roquette-Pinto--60 E-4, 5 (no date)1938 SP17 Nambicuara SP17
(ca. 1912)

177 [Fig., p. 60A]

[284] Some items in the collection are of special interest because they document the process of material acculturation. They consist on the one hand of objects that incorporate iron found by accident in the tracks of [Fig. 20] hunters and rubber gatherers; and on the other hand of imitative artifacts, made with the unskilled hand of a primitive people desirous of copying the products of a more advanced industry and the forms of a superior art.

[285: full page of figures.]

[286][Fig. 21] An instance of such imitation is provided by several diadems which crudely attempt to copy similar ornaments found among the Nambicuara; the latter are obviously alien objects plundered from northern tribes, where featherwork has reached a higher development.

[Fig. 68]

They have learned to appreciate the advantages of our hats [287] and prize them highly. An unhappy Indian who had not received one as a gift attempted to make one for his own pleasure, plaiting and adjusting bacaba leaflets...

Chapter XI

Conclusions

177 [307] It is not possible at this time to attempt a definitive synthesis of Nambicuara ethnography in relation to other tribes.

If we could distinguish in Brazil the two classical periods (Paleolithic and Neolithic), the Serra do Norte Indians would be included in the former: their axes are crudely chipped and their culture resembles the characteristic Paleolithic pattern. (1)

1. Diagramatically and in relation to their neighbors, the Nambicuara recall the Paleolithic peoples; but their culture, with its rudiments of agriculture and weaving and its crude

but smooth-edged axes, is more akin to the proto-Neolithic or transitional period. The present trend is to recognise in the New World Paleolithic industries . . . but no formal overlapping periods as in Europe. (R. L.)

A later footnote by Heloisa Alberto-Torres which is not reproduced here contains the following statement: ". . . an interesting ethnographic relationship is [established by] the absolute identity of Australian and Nambicuara axes . . ." (Ed.)

At first observation, the Nambicuara might seem to be an old and backward branch of the Parexi tribe.

[308] What we know of the physical anthropology, ethnography and linguistics of both groups, however, invalidates this supposition.

177 Yet their culture bears unmistakable signs of Parexi influence.
[46] The first is the beehive-shaped house, formerly built by the Parexi. This is an import among the Nambicuara; the original house of the Serra do Norte Indians is the screen of leaves and branches, similar to the kiême of the Botocudo (Windschirm of the German ethnologists) and reminiscent of the North American wigwam.

[Fig., p. 61A]

[308] And if they did not borrow the large "round house" from the Parexi, they adopted it from Bolivian Indians.

[49] Another instance of alien influence is the nose plume, which the Parexi do not wear now but which formerly, according to Antonio
177 Pires, they could not do without; and also the nose flute, which
594 [the Nambicuara] play unskilfully, as though it were a little-known instrument of yet unfathomed secrets.

The double flute seems to have been brought from the north. It must be an import from the Mauê and Mundurucu, with whom the Serra do Norte Indians had serious clashes as already mentioned above.

7:Roquette-Pinto--62 E-4, 5 (no date)1938 SP17 Nambicuara SP17 (ca. 1912)

[Fig. 70]

177 Their plaiting follows patterns clearly characteristic of the [255] Xingu (Trumai and Nahuqua) and gives proof of contact with those backward tribes which the rudimentary culture of the Nambicuara had already implied.

[255] The quadrangular barbecue, which differs from the usual pattern, is used only by the more advanced groups (Tagnani, etc.); it recalls the barbecue of the Javahe as depicted by Fritz Krause. (1)

1. F. Krause, In Den Wildnissen Brasiliens [In the Brazilian Wilderness] (Leipzig, 1911).

[256] The straw ornaments of the Nambicuara are quite similar to 177 those of the Saya. But linguistic affinities are even more indicative of contact between the two groups. No other people speaks a dialect [310] so similar to that of the Nambicuara in terms of word morphology, although the two languages are otherwise quite different.

171 It is interesting that a spontaneous affinity should arise be- 177 tween two remote and equally primitive tribes, the Guayaki of Paraguay and the Nambicuara of the Serra do Norte, from their common use of the jaguar hide helmet.

However, I am inclined to believe that the latter copied it from their neighbors, the Cayabi of the Parananinga River, who use helmets of the same material.

174 Unfamiliarity with the banana tree and with the pipe (an ob- 171 ject frequently encountered in North American mounds and Brazilian sambaquis) indicates how long the Nambicuara have been established in their mountain range.

Recognition of the Ge-Botocudo group as one of the oldest representatives of aboriginal South American populations is no longer a matter of dispute. . . . . .

171 [311] There is no doubt, in my opinion, that the [Brazilian] linguistic groupings correspond to ascending stages of civilization [312]. . . . . The Serra do Norte is inhabited by a people of Ge culture evolving toward the Nu-Arawakan culture, of which they have barely reached the initial stages.